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A prospective study on the link between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating: Role of food addiction and psychological distress

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Abstract

Objectives: This prospective study investigated the link between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating by (a) examining the temporal association between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating; (b) investigating the mediating role of food addiction in the association between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating; and (c) examining the mediating role of psychological distress in the association between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating.

Method: Participants comprised 1,497 adolescents (mean = 15.1 years; SD = 6.0). Body mass index and weight bias were assessed at baseline; psychological distress (i.e., depression, anxiety, and stress) assessed and food addiction at 3 months; and binge eating at 6 months. The mediation model was analyzed using Model 4 in the PROCESS macro for SPSS with 10,000 bootstrapping resamples.

Results: There was no significant direct association between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating. However, food addiction and psychological distress significantly mediated the association between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating.

Discussion: These findings highlight the indirect association between weight-related self-stigma and binge eating via food addiction and psychological distress. Consequently, intervention programs targeting food addiction and psychological distress among adolescents may have significant positive effects on outcomes for weight-related self-stigma and binge eating. The findings will be beneficial to researchers and healthcare professionals working with adolescents during this critical developmental period.